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# division of community services commerce matters



March, 2004

## ND Continuum of Care Plan

Division of Community Services program administrator Tran Doan says that the \$1.7 million grant which was recently announced by the Governor's office is the result of a long term effort and teamwork between several organizations concerned with the homeless.

"We do have a homeless problem in North Dakota," Doan says acknowledging that it's largely a hidden problem. Frequently it involves victims of domestic violence, or extreme health or financial crisis.

As many as 500 people are housed in homeless shelters, transitional living facilities or other temporary places across the state, but smaller communities have a homeless population too. This may involve forced housing with relatives or others. In cases of domestic violence, an individual may be unable to leave an abusive environment, or there may not be support through existing programs in smaller communities.

Another niche which is not served is housing for people in extreme need who may have disabilities.

The \$1.7 million was directed toward five homeless provider agencies in Bismarck, Grand Forks, and Fargo. Two were for transitional housing for women. Two were for housing for homeless people with disabilities, and one was permanent housing for veterans.

The North Dakota Continuum of Care Plan was a long-term comprehensive planning and development initiative to identify and address the causes of homelessness and the needs of the homeless in the state. Doan involved a consultant who helped them assemble the application. The final result was well received. Of all the state applications in Region VIII, the North Dakota application received the second highest score. ●

## Point-in-Time Survey of Homeless

There are more homeless people in North Dakota than you may think there are.

With support from the Division of Community Services, the North Dakota Coalition for Homeless People conducted a Point-in-Time Survey of Homeless People (NDCHP) for the State of North Dakota. The survey was conducted on October 29, 2003.



Tran Doan  
Program Administrator

The survey indicates that on October 29, 2003, slightly more than 500 people were housed in homeless shelters, transitional living facilities, or other temporary and inadequate places. This figure also includes people who may have slept outdoors or in automobiles.

The survey was an attempt to quantify the homeless population in the state. The information supports NDCHP's requests for funding to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Homeless Assistance Program for Continuum of Care funding. Approximately \$3.4 million has been received for fourteen supportive housing and service projects.

The survey was sent to 174 agencies in North Dakota that have contact with the homeless, including emergency shelter providers, transitional housing providers, community action agencies, human service centers, social service agencies, housing authorities, healthcare providers, emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, faith-based organizations and law enforcement agencies. The data helps community partners (services providers, policy makers, etc.) to better understand homelessness and to work together to solve homeless issues. The surveys were completed by the homeless clients. The results were unduplicated counts for individual agencies.

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## DCS Promotes Transportation Alternatives

Utilizing funds from the Alternative Fuels Initiative, three hybrid vehicles will soon be on the roads of North Dakota. The intent of the awards is to demonstrate feasibility of the new hybrid technology in a heavy-use fleet type of environment.

A "hybrid" vehicle combines the internal combustion engine of a conventional vehicle with an electric motor. Earlier electric cars relied on costly and heavy batteries which needed to be plugged in to recharge the batteries. While previously, the electric vehicles would draw electricity from batteries, modern hybrid vehicles use gas powered generators to perpetually feed batteries. In that way, the range of the vehicle isn't limited as it was with batteries.

The result is a vehicle that still burns gasoline, but is much more efficient – getting from forty to as much as sixty miles from a gallon of gas.

The vehicles are more expensive. Currently only two manufacturers make them, Toyota (Prius) and Honda (Insight and Civic), although GM has announced ambitious plans for hybrid pickups and sport-utility vehicles by the end of the current model year.

The financial awards are \$4,000 each to cover the incremental cost difference of the individual vehicle. The current awards cover three vehicles for the North Dakota Department of Transportation Fleet Services. The three vehicles will include one assigned to the Department of Commerce, one assigned to Department of Health, and one to general fleet pool.

"The project will go a long way in documenting the reliability of the new transportation technology and the economy of operation," says Energy Program supervisor Kim Christianson. He points out that there are benefits that go beyond the obvious financial savings. Air quality is clearly improved as less gas is burned to create emissions. State officials point out that this impact on air quality will be noticed more prominently in smog-encrusted urban areas, but the demonstration of this relatively "green" means of transportation sends the right message. ●

## Paul Govig Appointed to Bismarck School Board

DCS Director Paul Govig was appointed last week to serve in an open position on the Bismarck School Board. He replaces Sonna Anderson. Anderson is an attorney and was appointed to fill a judgeship.



*Paul Govig  
DCS Director*

Govig will serve until June, when he plans to seek election. Govig was appointed by Governor Hoeven to head the Division of Community Services in 2001. ●

## Residential Energy Specialist Hired



*Cal Steiner, Residential  
Energy Specialist*

Cal Steiner was recently hired as a residential energy specialist.

Steiner previously worked as the energy conservation coordinator for Community Action Partnership in Dickinson. He directed the program which weatherized the homes of low-income residents. He worked with the agency for 26 years.

In that capacity, he became known as one of the leading home energy weatherization experts in the country. Last year, he received a National Recognition Award from the U.S. Department of Energy at the 2003 National Training Conference held in Phoenix, Arizona. He also has become nationally known for his expertise in the weatherization of mobile homes. He has provided training on those techniques for weatherization personnel across the country.

Additionally, he worked in developing technology of pressure diagnostics in which blower doors are used to ascertain the optimal level of air-tightness for a home. Related to that, he became concerned with air quality issues related to health. He says his goal is to make North Dakota the top state in the nation in terms of the quality and quantity of weatherization activities. ●

## Renaissance Zones Spread to 16 Cities

More North Dakota communities have joined a growing list of cities undergoing makeovers through the development of renaissance zones. “The role of the Department of Commerce is to guide communities as they develop plans and carry them out,” said Rich Gray, who administers the program for the Division of Community Services. “Local property tax and state income tax exemptions and credits are ways the state and local governments invest in the renaissance of North Dakota communities.”

“The purpose of renaissance zones is to renew specific areas within a town or city. As community leaders see what is happening in other cities around the state, interest in the program continues to grow.”

Sixteen cities now have had Renaissance Zones approved. Hankinson, Hazen, Lisbon, Milnor and Wahpeton are the latest cities to establish renaissance zones. They join Bismarck, Buffalo, Carrington, Casselton, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot, Valley City, Watford City and West Fargo.

The 16 cities have 130 separate revitalization and re-development projects within the zones. High-profile projects have included the renovation of the 1890s Donaldson Hotel in downtown Fargo, which has been converted into a 16-room upscale boutique hotel, and the rehabilitation and historical renovation and preservation of the Vogel Law Office building in Fargo.

Other examples of projects across the state include: construction of a new restaurant in Watford City; rehabilitation of the former *Bismarck Tribune* press building into office space in Bismarck; rehabilitation of the old Sweetheart Bakery building in Minot into a pizza restaurant; construction of a bank building in Casselton; creation of new apartments in Grand Forks; construction of a 12-unit upscale condominium in Fargo; and rehabilitation, renovation and historical preservation of the former Franklin School building (on the National Register of Historic Places) in Jamestown.

“Each community writes a renaissance zone plan that meets its own needs,” Gray says. “As the program matures, we’ve come to realize that the size of the community isn’t as important as its vision.”

For example, Buffalo, with a population of about 200, is the smallest North Dakota community to establish a zone. Buffalo’s renaissance zone encompasses 22½ blocks – a majority of the town – and includes residential areas, commercial properties and six historic properties.

Private homes as well as commercial buildings have taken advantage of the program in many communities. Individual projects approved within the zones may receive state income tax exemptions and credits and local property tax exemptions for five years. Property owners within the zone can use incentives built into the plan for new construction or rehabilitation of existing properties. Commercial property owners have to spend 50 percent of the assessed value in rehabilitation. Residential owners have to put 20 percent of the assessed value into rehabilitation. Owners must meet all qualifications and have approval before they begin their work.

For more information on renaissance zones, contact Richard Gray at 701-328-3698.●

## Glaser Joins HOME Program



Wayne Glaser  
Program Administrator

Wayne Glaser has joined the Division of Community Services as a program administrator for the HOME program.

Prior to this, he worked for the North Dakota Housing Finance Agency (HFA) for 14 years. At HFA, he worked with federal housing contracts and conducted on-site monitoring of those units.

Wayne is a native of Bismarck, where he attended the University of Mary, and earned a degree in business administration. ●

## (Survey con't from page 1)

The survey did not include people who may have been staying with relatives or friends. Using a multiplier of 2.7 to include the hidden homeless living in this precarious situation, the working total would be 1,366.

The survey indicated that while many of the homeless were unaccompanied single persons, the total also included 136 children. ●

## DCS Sponsors Wind Conference

The Division of Community Services recently served as a Coordinating Sponsor at the "Wind Energy and Rural Development in North Dakota V" conference. The conference was held in Grand Forks on February 18-19.



The conference was attended by over 430 people. Participants included wind developers, utility officials, wind industry manufacturers, researchers, and economic development agencies.

Energy Program Manager Kim Christianson moderated one session, and Governor Hoeven provided luncheon comments.

Christianson said the conference attendees continue to be very enthusiastic about the future of wind development in North Dakota. The "word on the street" is that pending passage of the federal Production Tax Credit, a number of new wind energy projects in North Dakota will be announced in the near future. ●

## Spletto Elected to COSCDA Board

DCS HOME program administrator Michael Spletto was elected to the Board of Directors of the Council of State Community Development Agencies (COSCDA).

COSCDA supports the common interests of states with federal policy makers. COSCDA areas of interest include federal grant programs which states have the responsibility to administer. In North Dakota, these programs would include CDBG, the HOME program, and ESGP.



*Michael Spletto  
Program Manager*

The Association also represents partnerships with other federal departments or agencies with programs related to development. Spletto wants to be an advocate on the board for rural interests. He notes that the Board is largely comprised of individuals from urban areas, and he wants to reflect the needs of small states.

Spletto has been a member of COSDCA since 1992, and received the "Outstanding Member" Service Award in 1999. In this capacity, he'll have an opportunity later this month to be part of a delegation which will be briefing congressional staffers on issues related to development programs. ●



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